

Applicant respectfully submits that the cited references do not teach or suggest each and every element of the invention defined by claim 13. Specifically, Claim 13 recites, *inter alia*, a moldable thermoplastic composite composition comprising a wood fiber filler comprising at least 20 percent by weight of fiber having a length of at least about 15 mm and a diameter of less than about 0.5 mm. This concentration of fiber filler with the claimed dimensions is not found in the references.

The Georlette patent is directed to a thermoplastic composite composition including very small fibers, 0.1 mm to 3.0 mm in length. The Georlette fiber filler appears to fall under the category of "wood flour" or "dust", numerous examples of which can be found throughout the prior art as noted by the Applicant in the Background of the specification. The examiner attempts to make up this for this deficiency by relying on Bergquist for the disclosure of fiber lengths over 15 mm. However, Bergquist merely discloses a huge range of possible cellulose fiber lengths. Neither Georlette nor Bergquist teach or suggest a fiber filler with the claimed physical dimensions of the present invention (i.e., at least about 15 mm fibers with a diameter of less than about 0.5 mm)

Using long, "hair-like" fibers as a filler, as in the claimed invention, provides significant, nonobvious advantages over the prior art. As Applicant notes in the specification, a longer fiber can absorb greater stress and yields increased tensile strength and flexural properties in the thermoplastic composite composition. Moreover, when the longer fibers are "hair-like" (i.e., less than about 0.5 in diameter as claimed) the distribution of the fiber filler in the composite matrix is optimized. Thus, fibers having the claimed dimensions contribute significantly to the goal of a stronger thermoplastic composite product.

The prior art fails to recognize and thus realize these advantages which the Applicant has achieved in his invention by providing a selected concentration of long fibers less than about 0.5 mm in diameter. If this feature were indeed obvious, it would have been disclosed in at least one of the references relied upon by the Examiner.

Given the advantages of the claimed composite composition explained above and in the specification, and the fact that Georlette and Bergquist fail to show or suggest each element of claim 13, the Applicant respectfully submits that the references do not suggest the presently claimed invention, either singly or taken in any reasonable combination.

Claims 14-19 of the present application all depend from claim 13. In addition to the distinguishing features recited in claim 13 and discussed above, the thermoplastic composite composition of the present invention has additional advantageous features defined in the claims depending from claim 13 which further distinguish the present invention over the prior art.

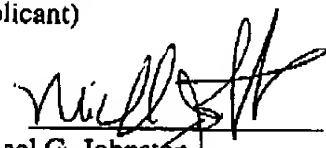
For the foregoing reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that claims 13-19 are in condition for allowance. Allowance of the application at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions about the present Amendment or anticipates finally rejecting any claim of the present application, a telephone interview is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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